The Wreckers

By FRANCIS LYNDE

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JIMMIE TO THE RESCUE AGAIN.

Synopsis.-Graham Norcross, railroad manager, and his secretary, Jimmy Dodds, are marooned at Sand Creek siding with a young lady, Shella Macrae, and her small cousin, Malsie Ann. Unseen, they witness a peculiar train holdup, in which a special car is carried off. Norcross recognizes the car as that of John Chadwick, financial magnate, whom he was to meet at Portal City. He and Dodds rescue Chadwick. The latter offers Norcross the management of the Pioneer Short Line, which is in the hands of eastern speculators, headed by Breckenridge Dunton, president of the line. Norcross, learning that Snella Macrae is stopping at Portal City, accepts. Dodds overhears conversation between Rufus Hatch and Gustave Henckel, Portal City financiers, in which they admit complicity in Chadwick's kidnaping, their object being to keep Chadwick from attending a meeting of directors to reorganize the Pioneer Short Line, which would jeopardize their interests. To curb the monopoly con-trolled by Hatch and Henckel, the Red Tower corporation, Norcross forms the Citizens' Storage and Warehouse company. He begins to manifest a deep interest in Shella Macrae. Dodds learns that Shella is married, but living apart from her husband. Norcross does not know this. The Boss disappears; report has it that he has resigned and gone east. Jimmy turns sleuth, suspects he has been kidnaped and effects his rescue. Norcross resumes control of the Pioneer Short Line, refusing to give place to Dismuke, whom Dunton has sent to take charge as general manager.

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CHAPTER VIII-Continued. -7-

The execution details had been mrned over to Clanahan, the political boss of Portal City.

The plot itself was simple. At a -certain hour of a given night an anonymous letter was to be sent to Mr. Norcross, telling him that a gang of noted train robbers was stealing an engine from the Portal City yard or try to do would cut no figure, and for the purpose of running down the line and wrecking the Fast Mail. which often carried a bullion expresscar. If the boss should fall for itas he did, when the time came-and go in person to stop the raid, he was to be overpowered and spirited away,

this that preparations had been made beforehand. They wouldn't tell me anything except that I was to be locked up for a few days."

"You knew what that meant?" "Perfectly. My drop-out would be made to look as if I had jumped the job, and Dunton would appoint a new man. After that, I could come back, If I wanted to. Whatever I might do no explanation I could make would be. believed. I had most obligingly dug my own official grave, and there could be no resurrection."

"What then?" pressed Ripley, keenly interested, as anybody could see.

"When they took the clothes-line from my arms there was another scrap. It didn't do any good. They got the door shut on me and got it locked. After that, for four solid days, Ripley, I was made to realize how little it takes to hold a man. I had my pocket-knife, but I couldn't whittle my way out. The floor puncheons were spiked down, and I couldn't dig out. They had taken all my matches, and I couldn't burn the place. I tried the stick-rubbing, and all those things you read about: they're fakes; I couldn't get even the smell of smoke."

"The chimney?" "There wasn't any. They had heated the place, when it was a commissary, with a stove, and the pipe hole through the ceiling had a piece of sheet iron nailed over it. And I couldn't get to the roof at all. They had me."

Ripley nodded and said, snappylike: "Well, we've got them now-any time you give the word. Tarbell has a pinch on one of the Clanaban men and he will turn state's evidence. We can railroad every one of those fellows who carried you off."

"And the men higher up?" queried the boss.

"No; not yet."

"Then we'll drop it right where it is. I don't want the hired tools; no one of them, unless you can get the devil that crippled Jimmie Dodds, here."

They went on, talking about my burn-up. Listening in, I learned for the first time just how it had been done. Tarbell, through his hold upon the welshing Clanahan striker, had got the details at second-hand. A lead had been taken from a power wire at the corner of the street and hooked over the outer door-knob. And inside I had been given a sheet of copper to stand on for a good "ground," the copper itself being wired to a water pipe running up through the hall. Tarbell had afterward proved up on all this, it seemed finding the insulated wire and the copper sheet with its connections hidden in a small rubbish closet under the hall stair, just where a fellow in a hurry might chuck them.

"Tarbell is a striking success," Mr. Norcross put in, along at the end of

"They Had Me Trussed Up Like a

Christmas Turkey."

things. "We'll keep him on with us,

Past this there was a little more

talk about the C. S. & W. deal, and

about what the Hatch crowd would be

likely to try next; and when it was

Ripley.

"it worked out like a charm," admitted the boss, with a wry smile, "I haven't been talking much about the details, partly because I wanted to find out if this young fellow, Tarbell, was as good as the major's recommendation of him, and partly because I'm honestly ashamed, Ripley. Any man of my age and experience who

that is coming to him." "You can tell me now, can't you?" queried the attorney.

would swallow balt, hook, and line as

I did that night deserves to get all

"Oh, yes: you have it all-or practically all. I fell for the anonymous letter about the Mail hold-up, and while I don't 'rattle' very easily, ordinarily, that was one time when I lost my head, just for the moment. The obvious thing to do-if any attention whatever was to be paid to the anonymous warning-was to telephone the police and the round-bouse. I did neither because I thought it might be too slow."

"So you made a straight shoot for

the scene of action?" "I did; down the back streets and across the lower end of the plaza, As it appeared-or rather as it was made to appear-I was barely in time. There were men at the engine, and when I sprinted across the yard they were ready to move it out to the main line. I yelled at them and ran in. Three of them tackled me the moment I came within reach. I got one of the three on the point of the jaw, and they had to leave him behind; but there were enough more of them. Before I fairly realized what was happening, they had me trussed up like a Christmas turkey, and loaded into the cab of the engine. From that on, it was all plain sailing."

"Then they took you to the old lum-

ber camp?" "As fast as the engine could be made to turn her wheels. Arroyo has no night operator, and when we sneaked through the Banta yard and past the station, the operator there was asleep. I saw him, with his head in the crook of his arm, at the telegraph table in the bay window as we passed.

-- out to the Timber Meund from that on up the old finished, and Ripley was reaching for the rail connections his hat, the boss said. "There is no I knew grom | change in the orders

going now, and we'll keep 'em going. | Drive it, Ripley; drive it for every ounce there is in you. Never mind the election talk or the stock quotations. This railroad is going to be honest, if it never earns another net dollar, We'll win!" "It's beginning to look a little that

way, now," the lawyer admitted, with his hand on the door knob. "Just the same, Norcross, there is safety in numbers, and our numbers are precisely one; one man"-holding up a single finger, "As before, the pyramid is standing on its head-and you are the head. For God's sake, be careful!"

It was late in the afternoon when Ripley made his visit, and pretty soon after he went away the boss and I closed up our end of the shop and left May pecking away at his typewriter on a lot of routine stuff. I don't know what made me do it, but as I was passing Fred's desk on the way out, stringing along behind the boss, I stopped and jerked open one of the drawers. I knew beforehand what was in the drawer, and pointed to it-a new .38 automatic. Fred nodded, and I slipped the gun into my left-hand pocket, wondering as I did it, if I could make out to hit the broad side of a barn, shooting with that hand, if I had to.

A half-minute later I had caught up with Mr. Norcross, and together we left the building and went up to the Bullard for dinner.

CHAPTER IX

In the Coal Yard

I knew, just as well as could bewithout being able to prove it-that we were shadowed on the trip up from the railroad building to the hotel, and it made me nervous. There could be only one reason now for any such dogging of the boss. The grafters were not trying to find out what he was doing; they didn't need to, because he was advertising his doingsor Juneman was-in the newspapers. What they were trying to do was to catch him off his guard and do him

up-this time to stay done up. It was safe to assume that they wouldn't fumble the ball a second time. Mr. Ripley had stood the thing fairly on its feet when he said that our campaign was purely a one-man proposition, so far as it had yet gone. People who had met the boss and had done business with him liked him; but the old-time prejudice against the railroad was so wide-spread and so bitter that it couldn't be overcome all at once. Juneman, our publicity man, was doing his best, but as yet we had no party following in the state at large which would stand by us and see that we got justice.

I was chewing this over while we sat at dinner in the Bullard cafe, and I guess Mr. Norcross was, too, for he didn't say much. I don't know whether he knew anything about the shadowing business I speak of or not, but he might have. We hadn't more than given our dinner order when one of Hatch's clerks, a cock-eyed chap named Kestler, came in and took a table just far enough from ours to be out of the way, and near enough to listen in if we said anything.

When we finished, Kestler was just getting his service of ice-cream; but I noticed that he left it untouched and got up and followed us to the lobby. It made me hot enough to want to turn on him and knock his crooked eye out, but of course, that wouldn't have done any good.

After Mr. Norcross had bought some cigars at the stand he said he guessed he'd run out to Major Kendrick's for a little while; and with that he went up to his rooms. Though the major was the one he named, I knew he meant that he was going to see Mrs. Sheila. I remembered what he had said to Ripley about a woman's giving him germ ideas and such things, and I guess it was really so. Every fime he spent an evening at the major's he'd come back with a lot of new notions for popularizing the Short Line.

When he said that, about going out to the major's, Kestler was near enough to overhear it, and so he waited, lounging in the lobby and pretending to read a paper. About half-past seven the boss came down and asked me to call a taxi for him. I did it; and Kestler loafed around just long enough to see him start off. Then he lit out, himself, and something in the way he did it made me take out after him.

The first thing I knew I was trailing him through the railroad yard and on down past the freight house toward the big, fenced-in, Red Tower coal yards.

At the coal yard he let himself in through a wicket in the wagon gates, and I noticed that he used a key and locked the wicket after he got inside. I put my eye to a crack in the high stockade fence and saw that the little shack office that was used for a scalehouse was lighted up. My burnt hand was healing tolerably well by this time and I could use it a little. There was a slack pile just outside of the big gate, and by climbing to the top of it I got over the fence and crept up to the scale-house.

A small window in one end of the 'we inches at the nough for a linear

peep-hole. Three men were in the little box of a place-three besides Kestler; Hatch, his barrel-bodied partner, Henckel, and one other. The third man looked like a glorified barkeep'. He was of the type I have heard called "black Irish," fat, sleek, and well-fed, with little pin-point black eyes half buried in the flesh of his round face, and the padded jaw and double chin shaved to the blue.

I knew this third man well enough, by sight; everybody in Portal City knew him-decent people only too well



Kestler Was Telling the Three How He Had Shadowed Mr. Norcross.

when it cape to an election tussle. He was the redoubtable Pete Clanahan, divekeeper, and political boss.

Kestler was telling the three how he had shadowed Mr. Norcross from the railroad headquarters to the Bullard, and how he stayed around until he had seen the boss take a taxl for Major Kendrick's. This seemed to be all that was wanted of him, for when he was through, Hatch told him he might go home. After the cock-eyed clerk was gone, Hatch lighted a fresh cigar and put it squarely up to the

"It's no use being mealy-mouthed over this thing, Pete," he grated in that saw-mill voice of his. "We've got to get rid of this man. Every day's delay gives him that much better hold. We can choke him off by littles in the business game, of course; we have Dunton and the New Yorkers on our side, and this co-operative scheme he has launched can be broken down with money. But that doesn't help you political people out; and your stake in the game is even bigger than ours."

Clanahan looked around the little dog-kennel of a place suspiciously.

"'Tis not here that we can talk much about thim things, Misther Hatch," he said cautiously.

"Why not?" was the rasping question. "There's nobody in the yard, and the gates are locked. It's a d-d sight safer than a back room in one of your dives-as we know now to our

Clanahan threw up his head with a gesture that said much. "Murphy's the man that leaked on that engine job-and he'll leak no more."

"Well," said Hatch, with growing Irritation, "what are you hold?" back for now? We stood to win on the first play, and we would have won if your people hadn't balled it by talking too much. One more day and Dismuke would have been in the saddle. That would have settled it."

"Yah; and Mister Dismuke still here in Portal City remains," put in Henckel. The divekeeper locked his pudgy

fingers across a cocked knee. "'Tis foine, brave gintlemen ye are, you two, whin ye've got somebody else to pull th' nuts out av th' fire for ye!" he said. "Ye'd have us croak this felly f'r ye, and thin ye'd stand back and wash yer hands while some

poor divil wint to th' rope f'r it.

Where do we come in, is what I'd like

to know?" "You are already in," snapped Hatch. "You know what he big fellow at the capital this about it, and where you'll stand the coming election if you don't p 8 out this fire that Norcross is kinding. You're yellow, Clanahan. That's all that is the

matter with you." "Tell me wan thing!" insisted the divekeeper, boring the chief grafter with his pin-point eyes. "Do you stand Tr it if we do this thing up right?"

Hatch's eyes fell, and Henckel's big body twisted uneasily in the chair that was grouning under his beer-barrel weight. There was slience for a little space, and I could feel the cold sweat starting out all over me. I hadn't dreamed of stumbling upon anything like this when I started out to shadow Kestler. They were actually plotting to murder the boss! It was Hatch who brok

your tip from the big fellow. The raliroad people must be made to get into the fight in the coming election, and get in on the right side. If they don't; and if Norcross stays and keeps his fire burning, you fellows lose out." Clanahan sat back in his chair and shoved his hands into his pockets.

"It's up to you Clanahan, and you

"row it," he deciared, "You've had

"Ye'd sthring me as if I was a boy!" he scoffed. "'Tis your own game fr'm first to last. D'ye think I'm not knowing that? 'Tis bread and butther and th' big rake-off for you, and little ye care how th' election goes. Suppose we'd croak this man in th' hot par-rt av th' p'litcal fight; what happens? Half th' noospaypers in th' state 'd play him up f'r a martyr to th' cause av good governmint, and we'd all go to hell in a hand-basket!"

I was cramped and sore and one of my legs had gone to sleep, but I couldn't have moved if I had wanted to. My heart was skipping beats right along while I waited for Hatch's answer. When it came, the drumming in my ears pretty nearly made me

"Clanahan," he began, as cold as an icicle. "I didn't get you down here to argue with you. You've bungled this thing once, and for that reason you've got it to do over again. We haven't asked you to 'croak' anybody, as you put it, and we are not asking it now." "'Tis d-d little you lack av asking it," retorted the divekeeper.

"Listen," said Hatch, leaning forward with his hands on his knees. Besides keeping cases on Norcross here, we've been digging back into his record a few lines. Every man has his sore spot, if you can only find it, Clanahan-just as you have yours. What if I should tell you that Norcross is wanted in another state-for a crime? Before he came here he was chief of construction on the Oregon Midland. There was a right-of-way fight back in the mountains-fifty miles from the nearest sheriff-with the P. & S. F. Norcross armed his track-layers, and in the bluffing there was a man killed."

Though it was a warm night, as I have said, the cold chills began to chase themselves up and down my back. What Hatch said was perfectly true. In the right-of-way scrap he was talking about, there had been a few wild shots fired, and one of them had found a P. & S. F. grade laborer. I don't believe anybody had ever really blamed the boss for it. But there had been a man killed.

While I was shivering, Clanahan said: "Well, what av it?"

"Norcross was responsible for that man's death. If he was having trouble over his right-of-way, his recourse was to the law, and he took the law into his own hands. Nothing was ever done about it, because nobody took the trouble to prosecute. A week ago we sent a man to Oregon to look up the facts. He succeeded in finding a brother of the dead man, and a warrant has now been sworn out for Norcross' arrest."

"Well?" said Clanahan again. "Ye have the sthring in yer own hand; why don't ye pull it?"

"That's where you come in," was the answer. "The Oregon justice issued the warrant because it was demanded, but he refused to incur, for his county, the expense of sending a deputy sheriff to another state, or to take the necessary steps to have Norcross extradited. If Norcross could be produced in court, he would try him and either discharge him or bind him over, as the facts might warrant. He took his stand upon the ground that Norcross was only technically responsible, and told the brother that in all probability nothing would come of an attempt to prosecute."

"Thin ye've got nothing on him, after all," the Irishman grunted.

"Yes," Hatch came back; "we have the warrant, and, in addition to that, we have you, Pete. A word from you to the Portal City police headquarters, and our man finds himself arrested and locked up-to wait for a requisition from the governor of Oregon." "But you said th' requisition wouldn't

come," Clanahan put in, Hatch was sitting back now and

stroking his ugly jaw.

"It might come, Pete, if it had to: there's no knowing. In the meantime we get delay. There'll be habeas corpus proceedings, of course, to get him out of jail, but there's where you'll come in again; you've got your own man for city attorney. And, after all, the delay is all we need. With Norcross in trouble, and in jail on a charge of murder, the railroad ship'll go on the rocks in short order. The Norcross management is having plenty of trouble-wrecks and the like. With Norcross locked up, New York will be heard from, and Dismuke will step in and clean house. That will wind up the reform spasm."

"'Tis a small chance." growled the chief of the ward heelers. "I'll talk it over with the big fellow,"

Again Hatch leaned forward and put his hands on his knees.

"You'll do nothing of the sort, Pete. You'll act, and act on your own responsibility. If you don't, somebody may wire the sheriff of Silver Bow county, Montana, that the man he knew in Butte as Michael Clancy

The divekeeper put up both hands as if to ward off a blow. "'Tis enough," he mumbled, speak-

ing as if he had a bunch of dry cotton in his mouth. "Slip me th' warrant." Hatch went to a small safe and worked the combination. When the door was opened be passed a folded paper to Clanahan. Through all this talk. Henckel had said nothing, and I suspected that Hatch had him there cultness. With the papers in his

pocket, Ciananan got up to go. was time for me to make a move,

It's curious how an idea will sometimes lay hold of you and knock out reason and common sense and everything else. Clanahan had in his pocket a piece of paper that simply meant ruin to Mr. Norcross, and the blowing up of ah the plans that had been made and all the work that had been done, If he should be allowed to get up town with that warrant, the end of everything would be in sight. But how was I to prevent it?

The three men were on their feet, and Hatch was reaching for the wall switch which controlled the single incandescent lamp hanging from the celling of the scale-house. If I could only think of some way to blow the place up and snatch the paper in the confusion.

Up to that minute I had never thought once of the pistol I had taken from Fred May's drawer, though it was still sagging in my left hip pocket. When I did think of it I dragged it out with some silly notion of trying to hold the three men up at the door of the shack as they came out, Hatch's stop to light a cigar and to hand out a couple to the other two gave me time to chuck that notion and grab another. With the muzzle of the automatic resting in the crack of the opened window I took dead alm at the incandescent lamp in the ceiling and turned her loose for the whole magazineful.

Since the first bullet got the lamp and left the place black dark, I couldn't see what was happening in the close little room. I could hear them gasping and yelling and knocking one another down as they fought to get the door open. Sticking the empty pistol back into my pocket I jumped to get action, hurting my sore hand like the mischief in doing it.

Hatch was the first man out, but the big German was so close a second that he knocked his smaller partner down and fell over him. Clanahan kept his feet. He had a gun in his hand that looked to me, in the darkness, as big as a cannon. I was flate tened against the side of the scale shack, and when the divekeeper tried to side-step around the two fallen men who were blocking the way, I snatched the folded paper from his pocket; snatched it and ran as if the dickens was after me.

That was a bad move-the runaway. If I had kept still there might have been a chance for me to make a sneak. But when I ran, and fell over a pile of loose coal, and got up and ran again, they were all three after me, Clanahan taking blind shots in the dark with his cannon as he came.

Naturally, I made straight for the wagon gate, and forgot, until I was right there, that It, and the wicket through one of the leaves, were both locked. As I shook the wicket, a bullet from Clanahan's gun spatted into the my hand, and I turned and sprinted again, this time for the gates where the coal cars were pushed in from the railroad yard. These, too, were shut



They Were All Three After Me.

and locked, and when I ducked under the nearest gondola I realized that I was trapped. Before I could climb the high fence anywhere, they'd get me. They came up, all three of them, puffing and blowing, while I was hiding under the gondola.

"It's probably that cow-boy spotter of Norcross', but he can't get away," Hatch was gritting-meaning Tarbell, probably. "The gates are locked and we can plug him if he tries to climb the fence. There's a gun in the scalehouse. You two look under these cars while I go and get it!"

"We've got it in the neck once more.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Cause of Forest Fires. Of thousands of fires only a fraction are due to lightning and unpreventable accident, says the American Forestry Magazine of Washington. which adds that the great majority of the fires that are constantly enlarge ing our deserts of barren sand, scrub oak, chaparral and briers, are due to the carelessness of human beings-due, not only to the carelessness of persons who are directly responsible for the fires, but to the indifference of the great body of people whose composite opinion permits the campera the farmers, the railroads, and others to solely for safety's sake, and to provide | start and leave or loss control of the am that do the dar are